

UO UNION EFFORT HITS RESISTANCE

The UO neither supports nor opposes the efforts of its faculty to unionize, a spokesperson says. It just objects to the all-encompassing and overlapping categories of tenured professors, tenure-track professors, adjunct instructors, faculty of graduate and professional degree programs, emeritus faculty, postdoctoral scholars, research associates and fellows, visiting faculty and supervisory employees as parts of the same union.

United Academics of the University of Oregon (UAUO) submitted signed union authorization cards (a card is a vote to form a union) to the Oregon Employment Relations Board March 13, and UO filed a petition objecting to the proposed union April 4. The petition states that the various types of faculty “lack a sufficient community of interest with the proposed unit.”

Regina Psaki, a UO professor of romance languages, says she thinks the issue isn’t about what the UO believes is or isn’t a community interest. “I don’t think they think we have the right or prerogative to decide to have a union at all, given the nature of their list,” she says.

“They basically dismissed the entire proposal and claimed that none of the various types of employees included in the bargaining unit are eligible,” agrees English professor Gordon Sayre.

“We have almost everything in common,” Psaki says. “Despite the fact that we have different job descriptions, our interests are so overwhelmingly similar that we belong in the same union.” Psaki says that all the faculty have the interest of keeping the academic core strong through the instructional and research mission of the university, and part of that is keeping professors from leaving for better working conditions.

Sayre stresses that those faculty working conditions are

learning conditions for students. He says policies that assign non-tenure-track faculty more students than they can teach or grade means performance will suffer. “We need to emphasize that students can get a better learning experience if their instructors and faculty have better working conditions,” he says.

Jim Salt, who teaches sociology at LCC, says the faculty in its union hasn’t had significant problems incorporating different types of staff into its union. Lane Community College Education Association includes full- and part-time contracted faculty plus professionals such as librarians and counselors who teach but devote more hours to other work.

LCCEA president Salt says that management often tries to divide different sectors of the work force by creating artificial differences or exaggerating minor differences, but faculty has more in common than not. “You’re all doing very similar work, you have similar issues being negotiated in the contract,” he says.

One way that the UO’s proposed union is considering preventing any real conflicts of interest is by having the tenure-related and non-tenure-related groups caucus and then reach consensus on major issues. “I think the advantage of that setup is that it resolves questions that some people have posed about whether the tenure-related faculty would dominate the leadership of the union because they are more used to performing service functions or whether the non-tenure-track faculty would dominate union because there more of them,” Sayre says.

When the union organizing process began, the UO pledged to remain neutral, and UO spokesperson Julie Brown says that despite the petition against the proposed union there has been no change from that position. “While we neither supported nor opposed union organizing efforts, we now have a responsibility to all the constituents we serve to advocate before the Employment Relations Board for a bargaining unit that is consistent with the university’s mission and core objectives,” Brown says in an email to *EW*.

The ERB will hear the UO’s petition challenging the union beginning at 9 am three days, May 7-9, in the ERB offices in Salem.

“I think we might have a long fight and court battle to come,” predicts Sayre. — *Shannon Fimmell*

EARTH DAY HOO HAA AND MUCH MORE

Earth Day was first observed in 1970. Forty-two years later it’s still going strong and the Earth still needs saving. Here in Eugene and the surrounding area, a lot’s going on to commemorate the occasion. How do you decide what to do? It won’t be easy, but here’s a roundup of some local happenings going on for Earth Day 2012. For more events, see our Calendar.

Saturday, April 21, at EWEB’s Rivers Edge Plaza is the utility’s annual Earth Day extravaganza. Mayor Kitty Piercy will be on hand and speakers will address issues such as sustainability in the region. Inside the EWEB boardroom, attendees will be able to view films and documentaries about the natural world and future challenges to preserving ecosystems. Some 40 booths will be set up ranging from “Ask a Master Gardener” to sustainable landscaping, and there will be a plant sale. See www.earthdayoregon.com/events.html

If you want to get out of town (we suggest taking the bus) then head down to Cottage Grove, paint those animal masks and find that furry costume you wore for Halloween one year, because this year is the fifth annual “All Species Parade” down Main Street in Cottage Grove Saturday. Started in 2008, the event supports animals around the globe by dressing up as them and marching through town. A downtown fair kicks off at noon Saturday at the Grove’s All-America Park. The parade will begin at 2 pm with a dose of dancing.

Nothing says Earth Day for kids like science! On Sunday, the Science Factory will have free admission to the Exhibit Hall and Exploration Dome. There will be earth-friendly activities with exhibit guides and a viewing of “Dynamic Earth.” See www.sciencefactory.org

Also on Sunday from noon to 5 pm is the Whiteaker Bike Fest, an all-out love-fest for everything you can possibly do with a bicycle. Starting at Scobert Park, at 4th and Blair, bike polo is the main event, but there will also be a dance revolving around bicycle partners. Earth-lovin’ tunes are said to be welcome and local musicians will play.

COMMISH RACE: GREEN OR NOT SO GREEN

As the May primary lurks closer and closer, campaign money and endorsements are piling up in the county commissioner race for South Eugene. The Pete Sorenson vs. Andy Stahl contest seems a bit of a liberal against liberal, green against green match-up, but race-watchers say it’s more clearcut than that.

“They both have their merits; I think Sorenson’s are better,” says Andy Kerr of The Larch Company, who recently weighed in on the race in an op-ed in the *R-G*. Kerr is a consultant for various environmental organizations across the West, including Oregon Wild.

Representing the Oregon Wild Conservation Leaders Fund PAC, Chandra LeGue says “For Lane County residents who care about what kind of place we leave for our kids and grandkids, Sorenson is clearly the better choice.”

Both LeGue and Kerr point to Stahl’s support of the controversial DeFazio forest plan that would log on 1.5 million acres of public forests to generate money for Oregon counties. “Sorenson instead supports working to find alternative funding sources that do not sacrifice our public natural resources,” LeGue says.

Stahl says he supports the DeFazio plan if it were to be modified. He emphasizes his work to save the spotted owl.

“Stahl did a lot,” Kerr says, “There’s no one hero here, a lot of people worked very hard on the spotted owl.” He says ironically the DeFazio plan would undo much of the work that Stahl did. He calls the plan, which stemmed from a timber trust plan Stahl authored, a political, not biological plan.

Stahl points to past disagreements with environmental

groups over how to save old growth and the spotted owl. “If I had listened to the Sierra Club then, our old-growth forest would not be protected today,” he says. He adds, “Get the picture? I lead, I don’t follow.”

LeGue says the Oregon Wild PAC endorses Sorenson because “Pete has consistently worked for and spoken out in favor of environment protection, and has been willing to take heat from powerful special interest groups in the process.”

Sorenson has also recently garnered the endorsement of the LCC educators union, which normally does not issue an endorsement. The union’s legislative PAC told union members in an email: “After reviewing all the candidates we thought that Pete would best represent the interests of LCC faculty. As you may know, Pete served for several years on the LCC Board of Education and advocated for faculty in the past as a board member.”

Sorenson’s campaign donations have included several unions, members of land use watchdog group Landwatch Lane County and local attorney and *EW* co-owner Art Johnson.

Stahl says, “You’ve seen my campaign finance filings. Friends and family. Nothing from ‘special interest’ groups; nothing from corporations.” Stahl’s father, UO professor Frank Stahl, has loaned the campaign \$10,000 and Randal O’Toole, a fellow of the libertarian and Koch Bros.-affiliated Cato Institute has donated \$500 to the Stahl campaign. O’Toole has been an opponent of mass transit and government land-use planning, but Stahl points out O’Toole won two prestigious environmental awards in Oregon for his work on reforming the Forest Service. The awards were in 1978 and 1981.

— *Camilla Mortensen*



PETE SORENSON